

## *Introduction*

This term has been extremely eventful, possibly the most momentous in the history of the party. Over the space of the previous twelve months we have negotiated a merger between ourselves and three other Australian political parties, then taken that straight into the largest Federal Election campaign we have ever participated in. This occurs with a backdrop of resurgent Covid outbreaks, the outbreak of war between industrialised nations in Europe, strengthened ties in the international Pirate movement and finally spiralling economic, environmental and climate related issues.

I am proud to be working alongside a rejuvenated Australian Pirate movement that although it faces greater challenges than ever before, our volunteers have done more work than ever before to hold the flame before our ideals of digital activism, human rights, civil rights and digital liberties. This is a time when our history and legacy is more relevant than ever. We come from a broad cultural movement that originates in the largest political melting pot of all time and one that believes technology can be used positively in building a more humane and just society. Our voice is a knowledgeable one in the practices of technology enabled direct democracy, societal inclusivity, evidence based policy and communalist movement building. And the way I have seen so many Pirates leap forward wholeheartedly into supporting Fusion, and our partners within Fusion, is emblematic of these ideals.

## *Fusion merger process*

Rick Falkvinge in the 2012 Pirate Wheel wrote how empowerment is the foundation of our philosophy. How everybody has a voice. But what we've seen increasingly over the past decade is the use of bad faith actors, corporate, political, and ideological, to silence those voices and push them to the margins. We cannot let that practice continue. Our platform boldly declares that free speech underpins our ability to think, innovate, create and progress. So we too must empower our collective voices, as Pirates, Fusion catalysts, Australians and members of a global digital village.

Although we went into the merger negotiations for Fusion in early 2021 under the shadow of a reactionary government, one where the Australian Labor Party marched hand in hand with Scott Morrison's Liberal National Party, what emerged from the process of Fusion was something that may one day be seen as inevitable - a complementarian approach. Our values had always overlapped but it was our identities that had kept us apart. That separation is an outmoded way of thinking. This is the vision with which I guide us into a Fusion ecosystem. A vision in which our historic political identities have intrinsic value, and our diversity is part of that value. We have no right to reduce that diversity, to mould our passions into a bland porridge. There will be compromises. And there have been compromises. But one element of Fusion which has arisen again and again, is the strength of our complementarity that even through conflict or disagreement, we move forward from strength to collective strength. Society has already interfered enough with the free exchange of tools, ideas, culture, knowledge and sentiments. The meddling of corporate lobby groups, political astro-turfs and hostile nation states must end.

And to those who agree with me, you have an obligation to act.

## *Federal Election 2022*

We acted together in May this year during the 2022 Federal Election. Our senate results were approximately the same as they were in the 2019 Federal Election, with the lack of established name recognition likely hurting our votes but in turn being offset by stronger volunteer campaigns.

- QLD: 0.37% (Pirates: 0.46%)
- NSW: 0.37% (Pirates: 0.36%, Science: 0.40%)
- VIC: 0.36% (Pirates: 0.40%)
- SA: 0.33%
- WA: 0.35% (Pirates: 0.59%)

## *Campaigning methodology*

The biggest achievement during the campaign was the entirely new campaigning methodology we employed which was built heavily around phone and SMS banking. We developed a pipeline of volunteers being activated by a combination of social media/email/SMS/phone calls, which then went back into volunteer engagement, and volunteer resources were gradually shifted over to letterbox leaflet drops, prepolling, and culminating in election day. The total volunteer numbers for each state (across all Fusion candidates) were:

- QLD: 20
- NSW: 30
- VIC: 40
- SA: 15
- WA: 15

We also had a good repository of template graphics in Canva which were reused across the entire country. This resulted in a high level of branding consistency, a greater range of merchandise designs and earlier access to merchandise designs. Special mention to Andrea Finno, Andrea Leong, Roger Whatling, Alex Jago and Aaron Hammond for doing the majority of the design work although Aaron Hammond is the only professional visual designer there.

## *What's next for Fusion?*

The areas we identified for improvement were better state level coordination, and more consistent planning and guidance from a national level, particularly around state level volunteer coordination. Many of our processes and documentation were being created for the first time on the run and needed to be changed. Making use of our collective experiences during the Federal Election I've begun formalising much of the documentation and planning to implement into the Victoria state election in November this year. I plan to employ a similar leapfrog process going into the NSW state election in March next year and the Queensland election after that in 2024. There are opportunities to help out in all of these elections from interstate, so I'm actively recruiting remote volunteers to help build up our institutional campaigning experience.

With this plan for year round campaigning, building off the strength of successive election campaigns, I hope to eventually transition towards consistently running at state and local levels to take advantage of name recognition and campaign experience. This hyperlocalisation should serve us well to grow our local branches in the long run.

### *International politics*

This year has seen the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which has given rise to increasing fears about a larger war in Europe. There are small signs that this isn't a completely unrealistic consideration, such as the large amount of material support the UK is providing Ukraine, as well as the US armed forces repainting many of vehicle camo patterns from desert khaki to green forest.

The position of the European Pirates is that EU member states should transition off coal and gas both to gain independence from Russia as well as to reduce emissions for effective action on climate change. The energy situation in Europe is complex, featuring a broad range of generation technologies to match their broad range of climates. Anyone interested in this topic I invite you to visit our Youtube channel and watch Pirates Empowering the transition: Energy Policy in the German and Australian Pirates, an April livestream discussion featuring (from our side) Australian Pirates Jay Stephens and David Kennedy.

Other issues the European Pirates are leading on include the push for fair and democratic digitalisation of services, transparency and democracy in government, and the need for consumer privacy in AI development.

Finally, Covid continues to be a concern in Australia. Most states have relaxed both mask and vaccine mandates. The eastern states still encourage masks, social distancing and vaccination however the rising Freedom movement protests were only moderately damped by their failures during the election and state governments are finally responding to pressure. Even supporters of the restrictions are starting to feel fatigued. At least we can be reassured that the latest Covid strains pass quickly and are less impacting than the initial covid strains, and anecdotally I can say that the Brisbane flu season has been an extremely bad one with some people being bedridden for days or up to a week. The Pirate position on covid policy is complicated - we support freedom only so far as it doesn't impact others, and actively spreading a dangerous disease represents a significant public health risk. Additionally, vaccines and masking are comparatively harmless so there is no rational reason not to other than bloody mindedness. But I suppose Australians always love a good argument.

Miles Whiticker, Pirate Party 2022